

Wedding Central

Shake that wedding-planning panic and book your celebration with a professional party host: one of Hong Kong's top hotels



Making a grand entrance at Four Seasons Hotel Hong Kong

WHETHER HE PROPOSED on bended knee or asked for your hand in a helicopter over Hong Kong, after the bliss of the marriage proposal comes the reality of planning the wedding. Regardless of the size of the shindig, this process has all the trappings of a full-time job, complete with sleepless nights, harried days and hour upon hour on the phone. So, for many couples, the easiest solution becomes the only solution.

A hurdle most couples stumble over right out of the gate is selecting a venue for the reception. He wants a beachside party in the Maldives, she a museum-hall gala in New York. The ideal compromise is to home in on local venues that have a lengthy tradition of hosting weddings, have seen it all and are well equipped to handle large, complicated events. Venues such as Hong Kong's premier hotels.

"Getting married in your hometown has the added convenience of knowing what's available in your city and what the possibilities are, as well as making you more accessible to your service providers," says wedding planner Sonya Yeung, creative director of Bliss Creations.

In addition to the benefits of accessibility, comprehensive wedding packages and housing guests under one roof, hosting a wedding at a reputable hotel ensures a high quality of service, food and decor. For most couples, minimising surprises is the ultimate goal.

A hotel ballroom is a natural fit for large wedding parties. And with a Hong Kong wedding, the guest list generally runs in the hundreds, if not thousands. The pillar-less Four Seasons Grand Ballroom is a massive 7,631-sq-ft space that can hold up to 456 guests seated at round tables, or up to 800 organised as a reception hall. Dressed in a palette of ginger and ivory, the ballroom boasts two-storey-high marble columns and filigreed bronze chandeliers and wall sconces, but it can be customised to the wedding's theme.

Couples who book their wedding at Four Seasons work with an onsite specialist who helps

coordinate everything from dates, the schedule of events, the marriage licence, transportation, invitations, catering, cakes, menu design, linens, flowers, hair styling and make-up. The expert can also provide a list of recommended vendors for everything from photography to party favours.

While Yeung warns that “the main disadvantage of planning a hotel wedding is the lack of flexibility, as hotels rarely like to deviate from an existing package,” at the Four Seasons, the engaged couple can either choose from a preconceived wedding package or completely custom-tailor their event.

For a wedding on an even larger scale, the 9,526-sq-ft InterContinental Ballroom can hold up to 840 guests seated banquet-style. The betrothed couple can conduct the wedding ceremony in one of the new Harbourview Terrace suites, then sweep across the grounds to an East-meets-West feast in this epic hall.

The InterContinental has partnered with Hong Kong’s leading event decorators to provide venue designs and audio-visual effects based on three pre-selected wedding themes: the Classic Wedding in white, the Contemporary Wedding in red, or the Garden Wedding.

Through October 14, 2008, couples who book a minimum food/beverage budget of HK\$990,000 will be privy to an exclusive, super-secret fourth decor option: the Crystal Wedding. This swanky alternative encompasses Swarovski crystal tableware and accessories for one or two head tables, a custom-designed Kelvin Production crystal swing, wishing tree and backdrop for the



foyer, and a Dorian Ho wedding gown with hand-embroidered Swarovski flourishes, among other things.

Should the guest list approach 1,000, Hotel Miramar Hong Kong houses the granddaddy of all grand ballrooms. After all, your “must invite” guest list will inevitably grow well beyond initial expectations to include that long-lost aunt you haven’t seen in 10 years or your mother’s sister’s husband’s cousin’s uncle.

The Miramar’s recently renovated, pillar-less ballroom, which covers a colossal 21,528 sq ft and can comfortably seat up to 1,000 guests, is on the penthouse level overlooking Kowloon.

The ballroom’s transformation was directed by style guru Colin Cowie, who has worked with demanding divas such as Oprah Winfrey, Jennifer Lopez and Elton John.

Cowie designed a ballroom with an entrance that showcases vibrant white manifold fins and an interior flashing 18 unique chandeliers comprising thousands of triangular prisms from the Czech Republic. Couples can personalise the ballroom using a rich palette of colours and themes such as ruby, silver, emerald, sapphire, gold and pearl. Hand-selected fabrics, luxurious linens, chair covers, tablecloths, flowers and candles are matched with each specific tone to create a consistent ambience. There’s a choice of three lavish wedding menus.

A quick hydrofoil ride away, MGM Grand Macau offers the lucky-in-love a chance to marry in a setting straight out of Europe. The gilded Grand Ballroom is an 8,686-sq-ft space that can be divided into three separate rooms seating a total of 540 revellers. The ballroom comes rigged with a ceiling-mounted data projector, built-in projection screen, soundproof dividing walls, broadband and Wi-Fi, and best of all, a dedicated MGM sales and events team that eliminates the need to scurry to and from Macau to map out The Big Day.

Couples who book the Grand Ballroom are granted exclusive use of the hotel’s over-the-top, 25,000-sq-ft Grande Praça as a backdrop for wedding pictures. The Grande Praça was modelled after an authentic Portuguese town square, with a glass ceiling and artwork throughout. Additional privileges include access to the hotel’s mahjong room, bridal room and cloak room, a banquet menu designed by the MGM’s chefs, two cakes, fresh floral centrepieces, champagne and a one-year anniversary dinner at Aux Beaux Arts Brasserie.

Not all weddings happen behind closed

Gold Coast Hotel's pumpkin carriage.
Above: The Royal Pacific Hotel



doors, however. Often, the best ambience is concocted by Mother Nature. “Many couples would ideally like an outdoor wedding, either in a garden or on a beach,” says Yeung. “So venues are starting to take on considerations for these types of events.”

At the Hong Kong Gold Coast Hotel, nature lovers can gather in an 83,000-sq-ft garden flush with 388 trees of different species and shapes, more than 36,000 shrubs and 3,300 sq ft of seasonal flowers. Manmade amenities include a rustic gazebo adorned with a Swarovski-crystal chandelier, a pumpkin carriage, verdant walkways, arches, trellises and a fountain.

More of an alfresco “grand ballroom,” the garden is divided into three areas to facilitate event flow: the Dream Garden, with an expansive lawn that can hold up to 500 guests; Love Avenue, a charming path blooming with flowers and perfectly suited for a wedding ceremony and photos; and Blossom Square, which flaunts a classic fountain and pastoral garden that also plays host to “I do’s,” although on a smaller scale.

If you’ve miraculously whittled down the guest list to a more intimate size, the Royal Pacific Hotel offers wedding packages at the two-storey Pierside restaurant, which boasts spectacular harbour views and outdoor and indoor function areas, in case the weather doesn’t cooperate. The 3,788-sq-ft upper level seats 78 people, while the cosier 779-sq-ft lower level accommodates 38 standing. Couples can exchange rings in the open-air Dolphin Square, which overlooks Victoria Harbour and West Kowloon.

The benefits of booking a Pierside wedding can include invitation cards, photo and video packages by Asgard Studio, three hours of live music, a selection of lavish menu packages, a bottle of champagne, a heart-shaped wedding cake and discounts at top vendors such as K&S Floral Decoration and Il Colpo Hair Avant-Garde.

The Royal Pacific’s wedding specialists can also help couples with everything from choosing an auspicious date to arranging pre-wedding medical check-ups. The beauty of booking at a reputable hotel is that it has probably been asked – and has fulfilled – every prenuptial request imaginable. So, instead of hemming and hawing over the thickness of invitation cardstock or the circumference of the centrepieces, you can focus on the big things, like preparing for forever with your soulmate. ■

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Newlyweds at Hotel Miramar. Below: MGM Grand Macau’s Grand Ballroom

